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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH BRAZIL-US PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Ambassador Sobel met with members of the Brazil-U.S. Parliamentary Group (GPBE) on November 30 to discuss bilateral relations and ways to increase contacts between the GPBE and members of the House of Representatives.

Ambassador offered to arrange a forum at the Embassy early next year to continue to the discussion. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador, accompanied by poloffs, paid a courtesy call on members of the Brazil-U.S. Parliamentary Group on November 30 at the Chamber of Deputies. He opened by noting that he hopes several senior U.S. officials will visit Brazil in the near future. He said he would like to increase contacts between the GPBE and members of the U.S. House of Representatives and would be interested in hearing the Group's views on ways this could be done. He also invited them to share their thoughts on how U.S. CoDels can meet their counterparts more regularly, and to talk about their interest in Washington, whether collectively or individually.

¶3. (SBU) Federal Deputy Luiz Carlos Hauy (Brazilian Social Democracy Party - Parana state), GPBE chairman, said he warmly welcomed the Ambassador's visit to the group, which includes 135 Federal Deputies and 19 Senators. He said that just in the previous week he had assumed the presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), whose mission is to bring parliaments closer together, and he would like Brazil to be a key player in the FIPA.

Slave Labor Allegations

¶4. (SBU) Federal Deputy Fernando Gabeira (Green Party) Rio de Janeiro state) raised the issue of slave labor accusations recently made by members of the U.S. Congress. He said he did not agree with the "offended" manner in which the Brazilian Foreign Ministry had reacted, and called it "inappropriate." He said Brazil is doing well in its combat against human slavery and is willing to cooperate with queries from the U.S. Congress. Ambassador said this is an issue on which everyone is united in opposition, and the Embassy is prepared to help the U.S. Congress if asked, but always acting in collaboration with the Brazilian authorities. He also mentioned funds that have been made available by President Bush for programs in this area.

Peace Corps

¶5. (SBU) Federal Deputy Feu Rosa (Progressive Party) Espirito Santo) said his state would benefit from Peace Corps volunteers, but the Foreign Ministry, possibly because of "misunderstandings," would not look favorably on this, and said the executive branch is simply not interested in the subject. Ambassador said we would welcome a Brazilian expression of interest in the Peace Corps. He added the USG would consider using the Peace Corps in lusophone countries in joint programs with Brazil.

Congressional Exchanges

¶6. (SBU) Several deputies were interested in discussing the modalities of ensuring useful contacts between deputies and representatives. Gabeira said he would propose to the next president of the Chamber of Deputies that more trips to the U.S. be arranged, but that it would be important to try to match up members' interests by subject matter so as to maximize the usefulness of the trips. Hauly added that when the Group, accompanied by Chamber President Aldo Rebelo, had been with Speaker Dennis Hastert they had proposed regular exchanges, and Rebelo had given Hastert a letter elaborating on that. These exchanges could be through the caucuses or arranged through committees, and should also include staff. (Note: the Brazilian deputies visited Washington in May 2006. As far as Mission is aware, there has been no follow-up action thus far from the U.S. side in response to Chamber President Rebelo's letter urging more exchanges between our congresses. End note.)

Visas

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¶7. (SBU) Deputies from northeastern states, where tourism is important, said many Americans do not come to Brazil because of its visa requirement for Americans. They said a bill has been introduced in Congress to eliminate the requirement. They also appealed for better treatment of Brazilian visa applicants. Ambassador said we now have the ability to separate out applications from students and business travelers and expedite them. He encouraged the Brazilians to press for more direct flights between U.S. and Brazilian cities to increase Brazil's attractiveness to U.S. tourists.

FTAA

¶8. (SBU) The Ambassador was asked whether the U.S. was still interested in the Free Trade Areas of the Americas. Ambassador recounted the Bush Administration's early determination to focus on Latin America. Other events had diminished some of the focus, but the U.S. is still interested in Latin America and very interested in Brazil, he said. Ambassador mentioned the upcoming visit to the U.S. by President Lula and said both sides are interested in discussing a strategic partnership, bio-combustibles, investment, and other topics.

Bilateral Investment Treaty

¶9. (SBU) The Ambassador turned the discussion to the prospects for a bi-lateral investment treaty. Gabeira said it was not a question of resistance to the idea in the Congress but that Congress is unprepared to take it up. He said next year the Chamber will establish a committee on foreign trade. Hauly opined that China gets far more trade attention from the U.S. than Brazil, while Brazil is a democracy and offers guarantees for investment.

¶10. (SBU) Hauly reiterated the group's willingness to continue discussion on this and other topics. He said they would like to take advantage of U.S. leadership and move

Brazil forward. Ambassador offered to arrange a forum at the Embassy with appropriate section chiefs to continue the discussion.

CHICOLA